

## Myths and Facts - Ozone Designations

**Myth:** A designation of nonattainment (unhealthy air) will significantly limit economic growth.

**Fact:** History shows this is not true. Nonattainment emissions controls are designed to help areas improve air quality even as they grow. Counties surrounding Atlanta, for example, have grown as much as 123 percent over the past decade while, the number of exceedances (of the existing 1-hour standard) have dropped more than 85 percent. Areas are able to improve their air quality without inhibiting economic growth.

**Myth:** Nonattainment areas have their highway funds cut off or are under other sanctions.

**Fact:** Sanctions do NOT apply to areas just because they are in nonattainment. EPA only applies sanctions if a state fails to develop or implement a plan to improve air quality. Historically, this has occurred only very rarely.

**Myth:** Meeting the ozone standards will hurt the economy with few associated health benefits.

**Fact:** Improved air quality means people live longer, healthier, more productive lives — and this builds a stronger economy. EPA analyses, based on recent monitoring data, show that meeting the ozone standard can prevent — every year:

- Hundreds of ER visits for asthma;
- Thousands of hospital admissions for asthma and other lung diseases – and about half of these hospital admissions are in young children;
- Hundreds of thousands of school absences; and
- More than a million days when people have to reduce their activity – and their productivity – because they are suffering from reduced lung function and other ozone-related respiratory symptoms.

**Myth:** Nonattainment is unfair because local areas are left to solve air quality problems that are caused by sources outside their area.

**Fact:** EPA is taking a wide range of national clean air actions that will help all areas across the country significantly improve ozone air quality. Many of these clean air actions will bring local areas into attainment without any additional local controls. These national clean air control programs include:

- EPA's regional ozone transport rule, known as the NOx SIP Call, will significantly reduce NOx emissions in 19 eastern states and the District of Columbia by approximately 600,000 tons starting in the summer of 2004.
- EPA's proposed Clean Air Interstate Rule would bring many areas into attainment with the fine particle and ozone standards. EPA expects to issue this as a final rule in late 2004.
- Clean Air Diesel Rules targeting diesel emissions from on road and off road diesel engines will help to significantly cut NOx emissions nationwide.
- EPA is phasing in very stringent tailpipe standards for gas-engine cars, trucks, and SUVs that also reduce NOx emissions.

**Myth:** Early Action Compact areas are getting a break from the Clean Air Act requirements that should apply to them.

**Fact:** Actually, Early Action Compact communities must control emissions from local sources earlier than the Clean Air Act would require. In exchange for making a commitment and submitting plans that will achieve clean air faster, EPA has agreed to defer (until as late as December, 2007) the date that nonattainment emissions control requirements kick in. All Early Action areas will be monitored to ensure that their planning goals are met.